



WHO Youth Council

YOUTH DECLARATION ON CREATING HEALTHY SOCIETIES

Building well-being, resilience, and trust



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IMPRINT

Author

WHO Youth Council, a World Health Organization's network

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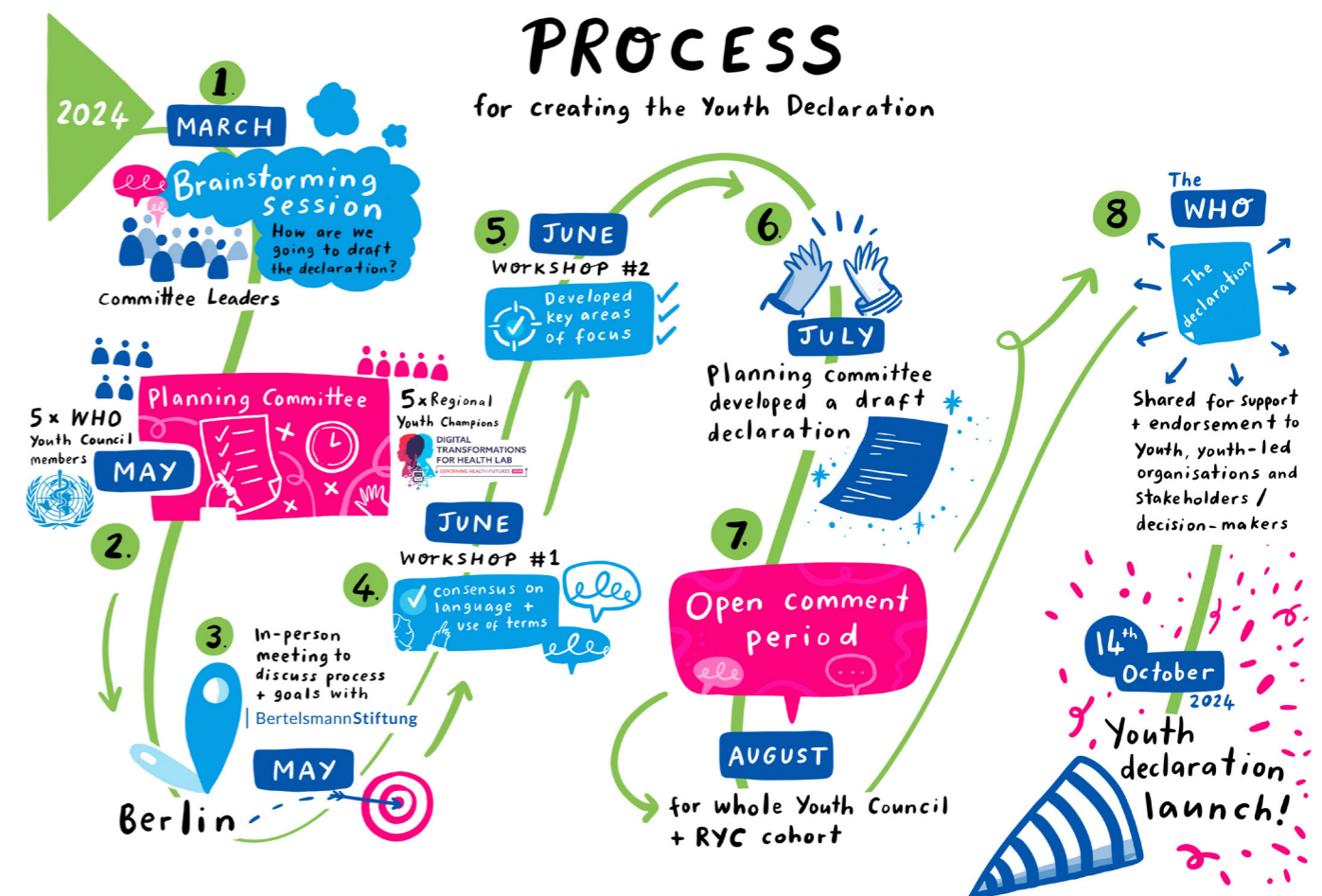
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www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/who-youth-council-2024

Illustrations: Katie Chappell

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The mission of the Youth Council of the World Health Organization is to foster meaningful youth engagement within the WHO. By leveraging the diverse insights and expertise of young people globally, the council aims to shape health policies and strategies. The council is composed of 23 youth organisations that work to promote public health in different ways at a global and regional level. In this Declaration, we set out 10 calls to action across 3 priority areas that require the collective efforts of governments, academia, the private sector, civil society organisations and individuals. These groups, in partnership with young people, share the responsibility to co-create healthy societies grounded in well-being, resilience, and trust. At the same time, all stakeholders must work together to develop policies and programs that support inclusion and address these disparities across all sectors.



PROMOTING HEALTH EDUCATION AND LITERACY

Health education and promotion should be interwoven into all aspects of a young person's life. That means that individuals need to be supported through formal, non-formal and informal education from early childhood and continue across the life course. Health, digital and civic education are core components needed to become and advance young leaders who are knowledgeable and have the skills and opportunities to meaningfully contribute to shaping better health futures.

We strongly believe that education and literacy—particularly in the areas of health, digital, and civic literacy—are essential to building a healthy society and environment. This effort must be guided by the active engagement and leadership of young people. We acknowledge the persistent inequalities that hinder access to education and technology, such as the digital divide, which exacerbates disparities in global connectivity and technological access. It is imperative to address these challenges to provide all young people with equal opportunities to thrive in the digital age.

WE CALL FOR:

1 Access, Equity, and Inclusion in Education and Technology

Tackling inequalities that create barriers to education and technology, to enable all young people to learn about their own health, that of their community and of the world at large. Education must be designed to represent and educate about the diverse healthcare needs that we have as individuals and as communities.

2 Comprehensive Curricula

Ensuring that health, climate change and digital literacy are included in the basis of national curricula, aimed at empowering young people to take action in their communities.

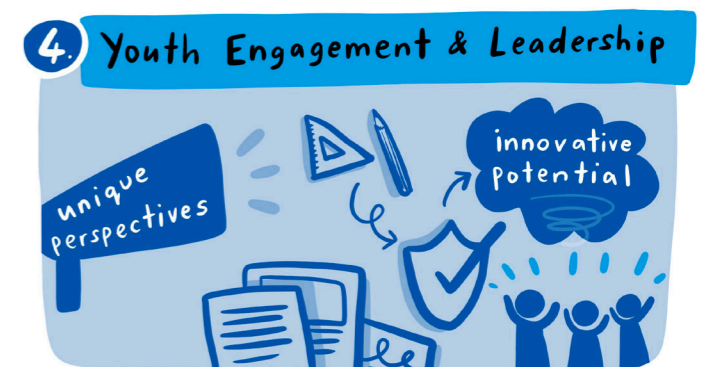
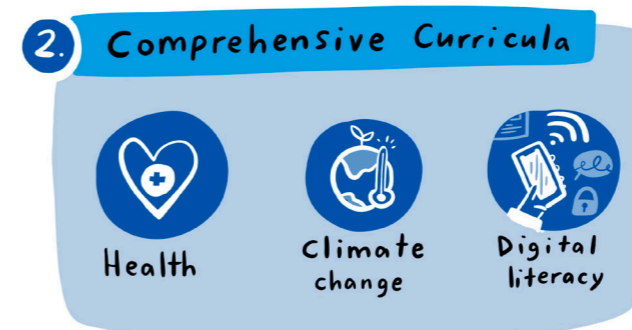
3 Quality and Adaptive Education

Creating learning environments that are flexible and responsive to the evolving needs of society, that enable experiential, self-directed and progressive learning and that embrace inclusivity and accessibility for all students.

4 Youth Engagement and Leadership

Encouraging and facilitating the active engagement of young people in the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies and programs, recognising the unique perspectives and innovative potential of young people.

By prioritising these themes, we envision a future where education and literacy are the foundations of a healthy, equitable, and sustainable world. This declaration calls upon all stakeholders to join us in this mission, ensuring that every young person has the opportunity to learn, grow, and contribute to a healthier global society.



ENSURING ACCESSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE

Barriers that prevent individuals from accessing healthcare and benefiting from comprehensive health education have a profound impact on the advancement and well-being of our society as a whole. When young people have limited access to good nutrition and healthcare their educational opportunities will be undermined. This will often decrease their social mobility and perpetuate a system where they continue to have limited access to healthcare. Whether young people face these barriers as a result of socioeconomic or geographic inequality, disability, gender or race-based discrimination, political instability or other factors, the effect is the same: inequality maintains structural obstacles that restrict opportunities for millions of young people.

We believe that ensuring accessible and sustainable healthcare to everyone is necessary to address broader inequalities in society and to enable young people, in particular, to flourish. Only when young people are meaningfully and equally included will we be able to realise our full potential and contribute to the development of our communities.

WE CALL FOR:

5 Inclusive, Accessible and Prevention-focused Healthcare

Promoting health policies and environments that are designed to ensure young people from marginalised and historically vulnerable groups have equal access to healthcare services, which are designed to meet their needs and to improve long-term health outcomes.

6 Investment in Young People

Empowering youth to become leaders and setting the stage for youth-led solutions in areas such as health, climate change, and education requires investment. By investing in the well-being and development of young people, we can reduce inequalities, help them reach their full potential, and save future costs, as preventive measures are more economical. This includes providing the necessary skills, encouraging them to explore new opportunities, and expanding access to digital connectivity to facilitate learning and access to (health) education.

7 Brave Spaces for Healthy Environments

Schools, community centres, and youth organisations must work to ensure that young people are empowered despite social and institutional barriers and safe from any form of violence, harassment, exploitation, abuse, neglect, injuries, and harmful practices. Young people should be empowered to co-create brave spaces, including those online, to exercise their human rights, and to seek the help and support they need to improve their health and well-being.

In realising these, we, as a society, will foster environments where young people are empowered to tackle and discuss complex health issues without fear. To address the most pressing challenges of our time, we must work collaboratively to invest in the future and to enable all young people to have the opportunity to co-create sustainable solutions that contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. We call on Member States, International Organisations, Civil Society Organisations, and other decision-makers to actively support young people as leaders and change-makers within various governance structures and to invest in the present and future generations to create a healthier and more resilient global society. We also call on private actors to include young innovators in the design and implementation of solutions and to prioritise public health over profit.



TRANSFORMING AND ELEVATING YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Young people represent a third of the world's population, however are massively underrepresented in decision-making fora that will disproportionately affect them. Whether this is regarding decisions on health, education, environment and governance – decisions made at the highest level of power have a profound, and often disproportionate, impact on young people. We recognise that young people have a fundamental right to express their views on policies and that realising this right requires stakeholders to value the contributions of young people.

WE CALL FOR:

8 Inclusion of Young People

Meaningful youth engagement requires Member States, International Organisations, and Civil Society Organisations to empower young people and youth organisations to co-create policies on a range of priority needs, including health and well-being. In doing this, they must recognise that young people may not have the same capacity and availability of resources due to varying constraints (finance, location, time, technical support, and more) that should be accounted for by stakeholders when engaging with young people.

9 Valuing the Young People's Experiences

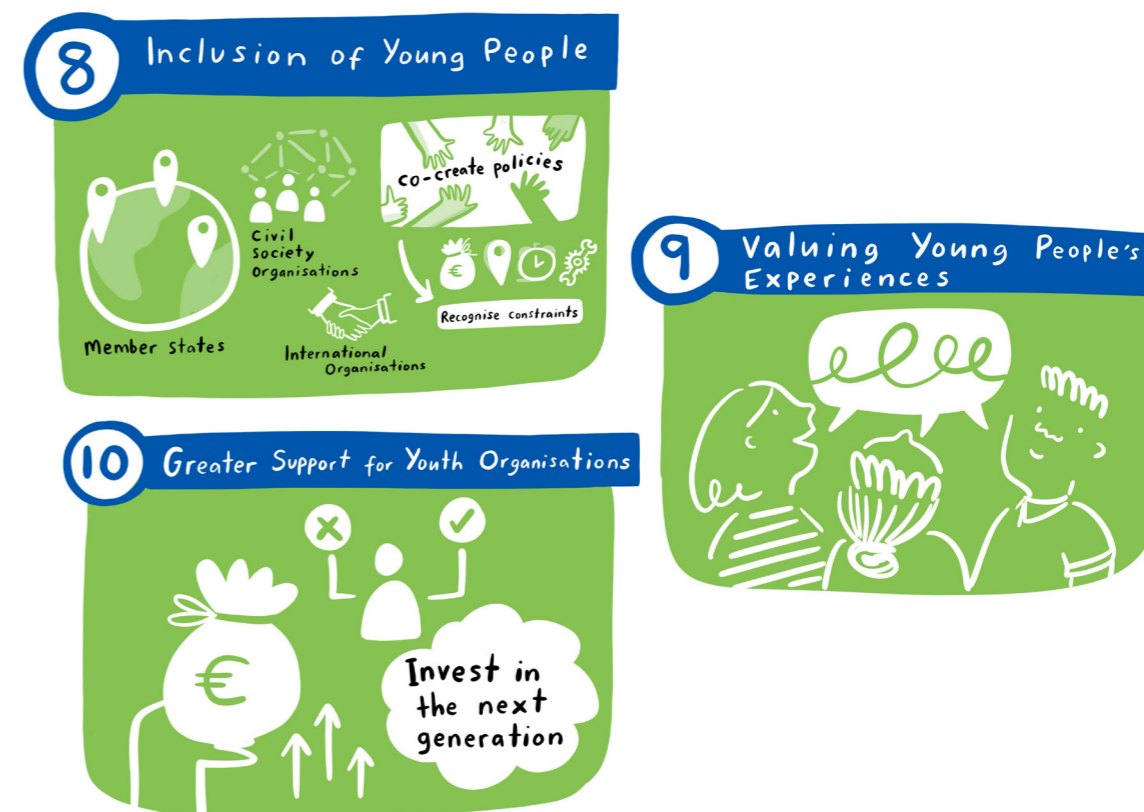
Enabling young people to contribute to policy development means recognising their diversity and views and valuing the contributions that young people, as individuals and as a group, can make to policy, implementation, evaluation, and social accountability.

10 Greater Support for Youth Organisations

Grassroots youth organisations that empower young people need greater support. This includes, for example, financial support, the recognition of non-formal educational pathways and facilitating access to decision-makers at the local, regional or global level. Supporting youth organisations is crucial for investing in the next generation.

Young people must be able to shape their lives according to their needs. We need to be consulted on the development of health policies and for our contributions to be valued. This requires all stakeholders to invest in supporting the development of young people. It also requires stakeholders to support youth organisations working on local grassroots initiatives to reach further and to empower more young people to shape global health diplomacy at the international level.

We must work together to create a society in which all people can contribute. A society where people are equipped to respond to the challenges we face and a society that enables us to progress collectively. Young people need a seat at the table and space to co-create. We need young people in all their diversity contributing to the promotion of global public health in creating a healthier global society and a world we all want to live in.



WHO YOUTH COUNCIL CALLS FOR

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